

Innovation and adoption of new agricultural crops by the rural dry zone farming community [A case study on Cantaloupe (*Cucumis melo*) cultivation]

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The study reviews the Innovation and adoption of new agricultural crops and farming practices by the rural dry zone farming community. The study was carried out during the 2001 and 2002 Yala seasons in the Mawathawewa agrarian services division situated in the Anuradhapura district. Cantaloupe (*Cucumis melo*) cultivation thrives in tropics and enjoys tremendous market potential overseas. The overall objective of the study was to observe and rationalise the degree of innovation and adoption of new crops and practices by the rural dry zone farming community.

Authors were responsible in identifying, designing and conducting of the project. Main functions included were making available of quality cantaloupe seeds, provision of technical support, advisory services and notably assuring the market for the crop. Twenty farmers were selected for the project and the crop was introduced into ten acres of land. Farmers were explained in detail about the Cantaloupe cultivation and were closely supervised up to the successful harvesting of the crop. Farmers were interviewed for data. Fifteen farmers participated in the survey. Tabular analysis, Excel and SPSS computer packages were used in data analysis.

The cantaloupe cultivation experienced unprecedented success at the very outset in 2001 yala. In 2002 Yala the cultivation was further expanded. The success in 2001 and the resulting high levels of income had increased the demand for Cantaloupe cultivation in the community. The authors have examined the background information, respondents' patterns of consumption, experience in farming practices and the respondents' perception on new practices. These were tested for major relationships with the respondents' characteristics. Relationships were sought with respect to the respondents' practice of innovation and adoption of farming practices and their attitude towards risk. The contribution of respondents' perception on major factors, in the successful innovation and adoption of farming practices was noted.

The results of Cantaloupe cultivation proved the importance of timely guidance and the promise of a potential market in promoting the innovation and adoption of new crops and practices within the farming community. The overall yield and the quality of same had further increased in 2002. The study further analysed the impact of farmer characteristics for successful innovation and adoption of farming practices and the major factors underlying the success of same.

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